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Meyerbeer's "Huguenots."

[From Heath's "Beauties of the Opera and Ballet."]

[Concluded.]

We must now turn to Paris, where the action of the piece is concentrated.—Behold the Pré-aux-Cleres, the Seine, and, down lower, the old Louvre, beneath the gloomy vaults of which sanguinary projects are brewing. On the left of the meadow, beneath the shadow of an aged chesnut, there is a chapel sacred to Catholic worship; in front and on one side are two small taverns—other chapels, dedicated to Bacchus.

It is the hour of the promenade, towards the end of a sultry day in the month of August. The citizens are breathing the fresh air on the banks of the stream; workmen and persons of the humbler classes are assembled, and in groups here and there before the shops of the itinerant venders of wares, the puppet-shows, and the bands of music playing in the open air. Seated at the table of one of the taverns is a party of young fellows and girls, who are chatting, laughing, and flirting, whilst their mirth is intermingled with the harsh tones of some Huguenot soldiers, who are drinking and singing at a table on the opposite side of the stage:—

"March! soldier of old Calvin's breed;
To you the Papist maid's decreed,
Yours the bright gold and silver fine,
And good wine!"

But room there—make way! There is a marriage procession advancing towards the chapel. In the midst of a brilliant assemblage of court lords and ladies a young bride approaches. Heavens! it is Valentine! de Nevers is at her side! The Comte de Saint Bris has given her to him to avenge himself for Raoul's disdain, for whom, he adds, he has yet in store a chastisement still more terrible. The *cortège* enter the chapel, whilst the female spectators go on their knees and pray. This pious demonstration irritates the Calvinist soldiery, and they resume their chorus, which arouses the young men and work-people, and they retort in threatening words and gestures. A struggle is evidently at hand, when the arrival of a troop of gipsies fortunately attracts the attention of all in another direction. These *gitanos* restore the gaiety of the populace; they tell the young girls' fortunes, and then dance a merry round to a joyous air. The *déshabillé* ended, Saint Bris and de Nevers come out from the chapel, where they have left Valentine, who wishes to remain there, engaged in prayer, until the evening. After the curfew, the relatives and husband of the young bride are to return to conduct her in state to the Hôtel de Nevers. All the wedding attendants depart: the Comte de Saint Bris remains, with only one gentleman, a brother Catholic, named Maurevert. Marcel, the formal servant of Raoul, soon presents himself before them, and hands to the Comte a note from his master, who has that very day reached Paris in the suite of Marguerite de Valois. Saint Bris opens the letter, which contains a challenge.

"As I expected," he says: and then, turning to Marcel, "This evening I shall expect Sir Raoul de Nangis on this spot."

"A duel with him?" inquires Maurevert, in a low voice; "you must not incur that risk;—

"Another course there lies
To strike an impious wretch which Heaven sanctifies."

"What mean you?"

"Come with me, and in the presence of the Almighty I will unfold to you the projects which are meditated."

They then both retire into the chapel.

Night draws on, and the sound of the curfew-bell is heard, and the serjeants of the watch come in and disperse the tardy walkers in the Pré-aux-Cleres. The students and Huguenot soldiers, whose day has not yet concluded, merely leave the outside for the inside of the taverns, that they may continue their libations and play privately. When the meadow is entirely deserted, Maurevert and Saint Bris are seen on the threshold of the chapel, and, after exchanging some words in a low tone, separate with an air of mystery. Thoughtless men!—they have forgotten Valentine!

Valentine, who, hidden behind a pillar, has, without designing it, overheard their horrid intentions, and who, for the sake of her father's reputation, desires to prevent their accomplishment. Marcel, appears punctually, impelled thither by

his fearful forebodings. The faithful fellow determines to be present at the duel, and, if needs be, he will die with his master. Valentine recognizes him.

"Hear me," she exclaims. "Is not Raoul to be here immediately?"

"He is."

"And to fight?"

"True."

"Let him come well attended."

"Gracious God! does danger menace him?"

"I dare not tell thee."

"Who, then, are you?"

"I? I am—the woman he loves,—who seek to save him even by an act of treachery,—and whom he must forget for ever!"

Marcel seeks to know more, but she leaves him with a rapid step, and betakes herself to the chapel.

There is no time to warn Raoul, for he arrives at that instant with his seconds, and Saint Bris with his two "friends." Marcel tries, however, by some words uttered hastily and in a low tone, to make his master comprehend that he has fallen into a snare; but Raoul treats him as a madman, and hurls at his antagonist his defiance in words so energetic, and always so loudly applauded:—

"In my own good right is my trust," &c., &c.

They then decide on the conditions of the combat, measure the distance and the weapons, and the two adversaries and the four seconds betake themselves to their swords. At the moment when they begin to exchange thrusts, Marcel, who is on the watch, exclaims aloud that he hears footsteps, and sees the shadows of a band of men approaching. He has scarcely said so, when Maurevert, followed by two Acolytes, rushes on the stage, calling for aid against the Huguenots, who, he says, are making a cowardly attack on the Catholics. At his shouts a dozen or more suspicious-looking persons come from an obscure corner, where they were in ambush, and attack Raoul and his companions, whom they surround. The brave Calvinists, turning back to back, show a valiant front to the enemy, who assail them on all sides; but in this unfair strife their small and condensed battalion is each moment more closely pressed, and they are nearly defeated by such vast odds, when suddenly they hear in one of the taverns this Huguenot chorus:—

"Plan, rataplan, war we'll have!
Drink, drink we,
To the good and brave,
To Coligny!"

"Defenders of the faith! to the rescue!" cries Marcel.

The door of the tavern opens, and the appearance of the Protestant soldiers makes Maurevert and his band retreat; but at this moment the young students arrive, attracted by the noise, and range themselves on the side of the Catholics.

"To the stake with the Pagans!" "To the devil with the bigots!" are shouted on either

side, and a struggle ensues. The two rival forces rush with fury against each other; Saint Bris and Raoul cross weapons,—another instant, and blood must flow.

"Rash men, desist!" cries a well-known voice, and every sword is returned to its scabbard. "Dare you, in Paris, and in the front of the Louvre itself, to engage in such hostilities?"

It is Marguerite de Valois, who returns on horseback to her palace, followed by her guards and pages bearing flambeaux. Saint Bris and his party declare that they have been treacherously attacked.

"It is they," says Marcel, "who have basely attempted to assassinate my master."

"How know'st thou that? Who has informed thee?"

"An unknown female, whom I saw here but now."

"Thou liest!" exclaims Saint Bris. "Where is this woman?"

"Behold her!" replies the stout sectarian, pointing to Valentine, who at this instant appears at the entrance of the chapel. At the sight of his daughter the Count is thunderstruck.

"What!" cries Raoul, "to save me she has not hesitated to betray her sire—and yet she loves me not!"

"She loves none but you," replies Marguerite, in spite of the entreaties of Valentine to be silent.

"But that mysterious visit to de Nevers?"

"She went to urge him to renounce all claims to her hand."

"Oh! Heaven, is it possible?—and I could believe that—Pardon! pardon! give her to me—to me who adore her!"

"You do love her!" exclaims Saint Bris, with savage joy; "then I am avenged; for this very day she espoused another!"

How can we depict the despair of Raoul, who bursts into an agony of tears. Whilst the Queen endeavors to calm his mind, a bark, splendidly ornamented, with silken sails and gilded sides, sparkling with lights, and enlivened by delicious music, descends the river, and anchors beside the meadow. De Nevers, attended by his brides-men and all the guests of his wedding ceremony, arrives to seek Valentine, and escort her to the chateau of her husband. It is hardly possible to describe the varied feelings of the parties, whose emotions of love, revenge, pity, sorrow, exultation and despair, are given in most complicated yet expressive harmony. Wretched Raoul! he is compelled to witness the triumph of his rival, to see him depart, with an air of pride and joy, and take with him all his hope, happiness, nay, life itself! Marguerite conducts the unhappy lover from the Pré-aux-Cleres, while the Huguenots and Catholics are still assailing each other in terms of foul reproach; and thus terminates the Third Act.

At the opening of the FOURTH ACT we follow the wretched Valentine to the Hôtel de Nevers.

She is alone—sorrow-stricken and agitated. The remembrance of Raoul pursues her, and in a moment of pious resignation she prays that every sentiment of a love, which must henceforth be criminal, may be at once eradicated from her heart, and that in its stead she may be inspired with the courage which virtue alone can give. In vain does she pray and weep, and weep and pray; her supplication is ineffectual;—the name of him she seeks to forget returns, in spite of herself, to her heart, her thoughts, her very lips. At that instant—is it a dream—a delusion?—Raoul himself appears before her aching sight! He enters, pale as a spectre, haggard as Remorse. He approaches her—he speaks. Oh, Heaven! 'tis himself.

"I would see you once again, and for the last time," he says, in accents of deep despair.

"Fly!" shrieks Valentine, allrighted; "if my husband or my father should find us together, they would slay us both."

"Wherefore should I avoid them? Since I have lost you forever, death is my only solace, my sole refuge."

"No, no, Raoul, live, and learn to acknowledge the true God, and then we shall one day be united in Heaven."

She then urges him again to leave her, but it is now too late; footsteps are heard in the vestibule. Valentine looks out, and exclaims:—

"Gracious Heaven! we are lost! It is my father—my husband!"

"Here, then, I await them!"

"What, Raoul, when that will compromise my honor? You must avoid them for my sake."

She then conceals him behind the tapestry.

In his capacity as Governor of the Louvre, the Comte de Saint Bris has been employed to bring together the principal Catholic noblemen, and to disclose to them the plot projected by Catherine de Medicis. They have all answered to the summons: de Nevers, Tavannes, Méru, de Retz, de Cossé, de Besme, &c., &c. Without being at all disturbed at the presence of his daughter, Saint Bris announces to the gentlemen who surround him, that, to put a stop at once to religious discords, to end at a blow an impious contest, Heaven wills, and Charles IX. ordains, that all the Protestants be massacred that very night!

"Who will strike them?" demands the husband of Valentine.

"We will!" exclaims Saint Bris. "Such is the order of the King. Will you swear to obey it?"

"We swear!"

Only one of the band has kept silence, and that is de Nevers. The others demand an explanation of his silence, and he boldly says that his honor will not allow him to immolate defenceless foes.

"When the King commands?"

"He commands me in vain when he bids me stain the pure name of my ancestors!" and pointing to their portraits hanging from the walls, he adds, "They are all soldiers—there is not one assassin amongst them!"

"Traitor! would you betray us?"

"No! but sooner than thus sully the brightness of my sword, I would break it! God be the judge between us!"

On hearing such noble language, Valentine throws herself into her husband's arms.

"Oh, now I am yours forever!" she exclaims.

But Saint Bris, pointing out de Nevers to the leaders of the citizens and the people, who appear at this moment, bids them not to lose sight of him until morning. They take him off a prisoner, and at a signal from her father Valentine retires.

There now remain about the Comte none but the gloomy fanatics sworn to the horrible assassination. The fierce interpreter of the behests of the Medicis gives them their final instructions, and to each and all he assigns their posts and their victims.

"Go thou, de Besme, to Coligny, and let him be the first sacrifice! you, Tavannes, Cossé, Méru, to the Hôtel de Sens, where the heretics are feasting with the King of Navarre; you to the houses and the streets—our foes are everywhere. Seek out all, spare none. When ye hear the bell of St. Germain l'Auxerrois sound, then strike without pity or remorse. The Almighty absolves you already, before you begin your pious work."

Then, to confirm this blasphemy, he points to the doors in the back of the stage, where appear three monks, who come down to the centre of the scene, chanting a solemn anthem. All present, by a spontaneous movement, draw their swords or poniards, raise their arms towards Heaven, and the austere friars burst forth into bitter anathemas against the Calvinists, and bless the avenging weapons which are devoted to the deadly work of extermination. On these consecrated swords each repeats his homicidal oath, and then, led by their respective chiefs, the throngs of conspirators disperse quickly and in silence.

When they have all departed, Raoul, pale and alarmed, comes forth from beneath the curtain which has concealed him, and rushes towards the door, which he finds closed from without.

"Whither go you?" says Valentine, who appears from her apartment.

"To warn my friends and comrades to arm themselves against assassins!"

"Against my father? Oh! pray refrain—consider!"

"To hesitate were to forfeit my honor, my friendship. Let me go without delay."

"You shall not go, unless you would pass over my body!"

Then follows a fearful struggle between the poor girl and her lover. She clings to him, clasps his knees, and entreats him, with tears streaming from her eyes, to remain with her until the dawn of day; but seeing him unmoved by her tears and agony, she cries,—

"Oh! I would not have thee die, Raoul!—Raoul, I love thee!"

This utterance from the heart—this impassioned avowal, makes the young cavalier hesitate. He forgets all his religion, his duty, his menaced comrades, and he falls at the feet of Valentine overwhelmed with love and joy. The toll of a distant bell recalls him to his senses.

"Ah, that is the signal for the massacre!" he exclaims, "and my friends are already sacrificed. Farewell!"

"I hasten to defend them,
Or share their threatened fate!"

Their struggle, which had been momentarily interrupted, is renewed. Valentine encircles him in her arms again, clinging to him with all the strength of despair, seeking to retain him by all the reiterated protestations of the most passionate love; but it is too late. There is no longer an echo in the breast of Raoul, to whose heart every note of the tocsin sounds a knell. Again the sound of the bell is heard, and the noise of arms, and the shout of combatants.

"Dost thou hear?" says the distracted Raoul, "my friends' fate—they cry for me! Heaven watch over thee, my beloved one—I must avenge them, or die!" And, disengaging himself violently from the clasp of his adored, he leaps into the street by the window. Valentine shrieks violently, and falls fainting on the ground.

As a theatrical situation this scene, with only two actors, is indubitably the finest in the whole opera. It produced on the first representation the most remarkable effect, and was followed throughout by the utmost anxiety, fear and anguish, excited by the perpetual change of interest which the progress of the act exhibited. As a man who is thoroughly versed in his business, M. Scribe chose it as the termination of his Fourth Act, well knowing that in all plays, lyric or otherwise, success depends in a great measure on the force, progress, and working out of this act. From that moment the result of the poem was decided. We must add, too, that the struggle of the two lovers was most powerfully depicted by Nourrit and Mademoiselle Falcon, and also by their successors, Madame Stoltz and Duprez.

THE FIFTH ACT consists of a series of tableaux, which should be seen, as it is difficult to describe them. During its progress, the action of the drama is marked by scenic effects.

The curtain at its rising discloses the interior of the Hôtel de Sens, all the apartments of which are illuminated as if for a ball, and filled by a numerous assembly. All the Protestant chiefs are there. Ladies of the court, in their gala dresses, laugh, and talk, and dance with the young nobles. A variety of dances and amusements succeed rapidly, and all appear light of step and joyous of heart, when Marguerite de Valois and Henri de Navarre appear in the midst of the ball. Groups of ladies and cavaliers precede the royal pair, and pay their respects and the honors of a fête given expressly on occasion of the marriage. The King and Princess cross the saloon, then disappear, and the dances recommence. At a moment, far above the crash of the orchestra, is heard the tolling of a distant bell. The dancers pause and listen, but this sound does not instil any ideas of terror or dismay, and the ball is resumed with increased gaiety and animation. All at once another noise is heard, which begins at a distance, comes nearer, and then all eyes are turned with anxiety towards the bottom of the stage, and Raoul is seen entering with a hurried step, pale, with his hair dishevelled, and his garments stained with blood.

"To arms! to arms!" he cries, in a voice of thunder. "Our friends are murdered—the assassins draw nigh, with hasty and deadly steps!"

They cannot believe him; and he then relates the fearful scenes he has witnessed:—

"By the glare of their torches' funeral light,
I saw the blood-stained soldiers as they strode;
Their voices yelling in the fearful night—
"Strike, strike the wretches who're condemned by God!"

He has seen Coligny fall beneath the steel of the murderers, who spare neither the old, women, nor children. As he was hastening to the Louvre, to entreat justice of the King, he had seen Charles IX. from the balcony of the palace setting the example and exciting the carnage. At this declaration all present utter a cry of horror and of vengeance. The women, palsied with fear, rush out hastily, followed by their pages and attendants, by all the doors of the apartments, and the men, drawing their swords, hasten after Raoul, with whom they repeat,—

"Sword to sword let's now oppose,
Avenge our brethren on our foes!
Down with the vile assassins—down!"

The scene changes to a cloister, at the back of which is a Protestant church, of which the windows appear lighted up. The Calvinist women, carrying their children in their arms, enter in haste and terror by a side door, seeking a refuge from the sanguinary persecutors. Marcel, who arrives at the same time, wounded and faint, shows them a small wicket-gate, which leads to the interior of the church, and then he goes on his knees and prays in silence. Raoul enters.

"Is it thou, Marcel?" he inquires.

"Yes; I was praying for you, and I bless Heaven that I see you once more!"

"Thou art wounded!" exclaims his master, on looking earnestly at him; "but I will revenge thee!"

"Alas! it is impossible; we are surrounded, hemmed in on all sides. This temple is our last refuge; enter there—there, at least," we shall die on holy ground!"

"Whither do ye hasten?" asks a voice eagerly. It is the voice of Valentine.

"To glory!" replies Raoul.

"To martyrdom!" exultingly cries Marcel.

"No, you shall live—for I come to save you," says the young maiden to her lover; and she gives him a white scarf, by the protection of which he can reach the Louvre in safety, and, when there, Marguerite de Valois will obtain for him his life, if he will promise to embrace the Catholic faith.

Raoul rejects the proposal with scorn;—he will die, as he has lived, in the faith of his forefathers.

"Even did I become an apostate," he says, passionately, to Valentine, "you would not be mine! All conspires to keep us separate!"

"Oh, no! I may love you now without a crime."

"Yes," says Marcel, "de Nevers died the victim of his generosity, whilst attempting to rescue me from the hands of the assassins."

"What! is he dead?" cries Raoul: "is he dead? And a violent struggle between love and duty arises in his mind.

"Marcel," he exclaims,

"Dost thou not see the bliss that is before me?"

"And see'st not thou God's threatening finger o'er thee?"

replies the old Puritan, in a tone of severe reproach.

Raoul hesitates but one instant longer; then, seizing the hand of his faithful adherent, he says,—

"Adieu, Valentine! I await my death near thee."

"Then you refuse the certainty of life and safety which I bring thee? When I would live for thee alone, ungrateful man! thou wouldst die without me! But learn the depth—the sincerity—of a woman's love: that I may not leave thee, but cling to thee in life and death, I here abjure the Catholic faith. I am now and henceforth a Protestant. In hell or heaven, wheresoever be thy lot, there shall be mine also!

"None but God's will be done,
Whate'er he may decree;
So we on earth be one,
And in eternity!"

At these words, spoken with enthusiasm, Raoul throws himself into the arms of Valentine, whose countenance is radiant with resolution and beauty, and turning towards Marcel (who is deeply moved at this scene) he says,—

"No minister of Heaven is at hand to sanctify this union; but do thou, old and faithful friend, by the rights of virtue and age, consecrate our marriage in the presence of the Almighty God."

Marcel is wondrously affected, and a mental struggle appears for an instant—it is but for an instant—to agitate the war-bronzed features of the soldier, to shake his stalwart frame. It passes—(we should mention, in justice to the superb artist whom we have previously named, that this moment of agony is most exquisitely given by Staudigl)—and he is humiliated that his love for one, his admiration of the other, of the beings before him, had even suggested a thought that they might be saved from martyrdom by a few false words.

It is over, the fire of enthusiasm rekindles the veteran's eye, and its glow rushes to his darkened cheek. The gentlest, the loveliest of Christian rites, shall be celebrated even at that moment of fatal presentiment, of pending destruction.

The lovers kneel, and Marcel, with outstretched hands, and tones of the deepest pathos, bids them swear eternal love and union even in death. They vow, and he confirms the oath, in a noble trio, during which is heard, at intervals, a chorus from the church where Luther's Hymn is sung by the female and youthful voices. Raoul and Valentine are wedded—what more has Marcel to do on earth?

"For his creed, for his Master, his race he has run,
And he welcomes the death—for his mission is done."

Suddenly the pious strain is interrupted by a vast noise of arms clashing and loud shoutings. At the back of the scene, through the gratings, are seen the flames of torches and the glitter of halberds;—the murderers have assailed the last asylum of the Calvinists! The Protestants, far from showing dismay, sing their holy canticle with redoubled fervor, and for an instant a great tumult and discord reign; then all is suddenly hushed—the lights are extinguished, and all becomes silence and darkness.

"They sing no longer!" exclaim Valentine and Raoul at the same time.

"They are with their God!" adds Marcel, solemnly.

Again the three, full of religious fervor, and animated by pious inspirations, encourage each other to await with resignation the death which so speedily awaits them.

At that moment armed men appear, and having broken the door of the cloister rush on to the stage. Raoul, Marcel, and Valentine, hand in hand, advance, and present their bosoms to the deadly weapons of the assassins.

They retreat, as if astonished; then return, surround them, and, pointing to the cross of Lorraine and the white scarf, exclaim,—

"Abjure or die!"

"We will die!" exclaim the three martyrs, with one voice.

Their murderers, exasperated, rush at them, separate them, and take them in different directions; and at the instant they disappear several reports of fire-arms are heard in the street.

The scene then changes for the last time.

The theatre represents the view of a quarter of Paris in the year 1572.

The massacre is here seen in the full display of its horrible extent. Bands of furious soldiery overrun the city, spreading terror and death in all directions. Raoul and Marcel have fallen in the highroad, mortally wounded: Valentine is there, attending and consoling them. A body of musketeers appear on one side of the stage, with Saint Bris at their head.

"Who goes there?" he asks in hoarse tones.

Raoul attempts to reply; Valentine places her hand over his mouth: but, making a desperate effort, he half raises himself, and cries,—

"A Huguenot!" and then falls lifeless.

"We, too, are Huguenots!" exclaim Valentine and Marcel.

"Fire!" says the Comte to his troop.

The soldiers obey, and Valentine, pierced to the heart by a bullet, falls, uttering a dreadful shriek.

Saint Bris recognizes her voice, and shrieks out, "My child!"

"Yes," says Marcel, "God hath already avenged us: a moment, and I go into His presence to accuse you!"

"And I to pray for thee," murmured Valentine, with her dying breath.

During this scene of death and desolation Marguerite de Valois arrives, who, having just quitted the ball, is hastening to the Louvre. At the sight of the two lovers extended lifeless on the earth she utters a cry of intense grief, and with her hand waves to the Catholic soldiery to cease their work of vengeance and bloodshed.

This is a sketch of the "The Huguenots." It required, as we have already remarked, all the skill of the practised pen and apt judgment of M. Scribe to avoid the many difficulties, and even dangers, of the subject he had selected. In despite of the great space occupied by religious feuds, Love, the omnipotent groundwork of dramatic representation, still maintains ample prominence. The progress of the action is lively, interesting, and varied: in fact, it is one of the best of the *libretti* on the French or any other operatic stage, and the scenic department is first-rate for display and effect. We will candidly avow our opinion, that Meyerbeer must have had a difficult task to wed the prosaic verse of Scribe with his glorious music; which is, indeed, a *chef-d'œuvre* of harmony and musical science, whose beauties and perfections can never be obliterated from the memories of those who have had the good fortune to hear it well played and sung, and the good taste to appreciate its sterling merits.

The last two acts are, perhaps, the best in the opera, but the first three soon gained ground in popular favor, and have justly retained it. In the first act we have the chorus of the revellers, the romance of Raoul; the hymn sung by Marcel, which is the German air of "*Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott*—The Lord is unto us a strong tower," the words and the music being the composition of Luther himself, but which the skilful composer has heightened by a splendid accompaniment. Then we have the Huguenot air, "Down with the Convents accursed!" during which we have the *pif-paf* of the balls and the noise of the cannonade, the lively cavatina of Urbain, and the delightful *septette* which follows,—all conspiring to make the first act a splendid introduction, glowing with life, spirit, and joyousness.

The second act begins with three *morceaux*, which form the principal situations: first, the glorious air which Marguerite de Valois sings—a sparkling and skilful combination of notes, sustained in the *allegro* by a *quintette* of female voices which harmonize in chromatic variations as novel in idea as masterly in effect; then the duet of the Princess and Raoul, a flowing and original melody, full of delightful turns; and then concluding with a chorus so powerful and effective!

At the opening of the third act it would seem as though the musician wished to laugh at difficulties: he has brought together four or five different choruses which cross each other, interfere, mingle, without for one instant injuring the harmony or diminishing the effect. There is the chorus of the Huguenot soldiers, "On, brave lads!" which begins in *four* time, and towards the end, by an unprecedented *tour de force*, glides insensibly into a *valse* movement. With this chorus, so varied in rhythm and arrangements, we have the round of the gipsies and the monotonous *chime* of the curfew. Then we have the duo in which Valentine informs Marcel of his master's danger—a splendid "bit," and the *septette* of the duet so magnificently led off by Raoul, "In my own right I have full faith,"—a glowing strain, and enough of itself to give celebrity to the act.

We now come to the fourth act, in which terror and passion swell the scene on all sides; and throughout the scene, from the entrance of

the monks, the music is characterized by the utmost magnificence and sublimity of style.—Nothing can exceed the effect produced by the fearful trio; "Glory to God the Avenger," which precedes the benediction of the unsheathed daggers; and so the excitement proceeds, without constraint or any artificial means, by the aid of the more simple of musical resources. The psalmody, which bursts on us at first with the wrath of the tempest, and ends in deep notes like the distant growling of the thunder, is cut from the first by an accompaniment in discord, which descends until the voices again resume the upper part. After the adjuration of the monks we have a full chorus glowing with energy, fervency, rage, and religious fury, whose general effect, skilfully managed, gives to the savageness of fanaticism a tone which is effective, majestic, solemn. Then the delightful duet in which Valentine and Raoul struggle with each other, in alternations of despair and love, grief and ecstasy! We are led away by the scene, the situation, the music, and the singers; and when the curtain falls we ask, What more can be expected of musical composition and of stage effect?

There is yet another scene, most striking and powerful: it is that in which Raoul and Valentine are united by Marcel when he is dying, and when the three willing martyrs, in a splendid trio, which seems altogether to be strained from terrestrial pollution, offer their lives as a willing sacrifice to the God of Luther.

The genius of Meyerbeer is essentially devotional. His choral effects have almost invariably an elevation which can only be produced by long study of the association of religious ideas. The situations in which he most delights are derived less from incidents of human life and human passion than from the profounder conflicts of supernatural agencies. In the opera we have now analyzed, the religious sentiment of the composition approximates more nearly to devotion as understood and recognized in England than was to be expected from a theatrical poet. The character of Marcel, as developed in "The Huguenots," might easily be taken for one of the enthusiastic and high-minded Puritans who fought in the cause of religious liberty, before the "cause" itself had become a mere stepping-stone for advancing the selfish interests of the Parliamentary leaders. The stern devotion displayed by Marcel to his chief was also the eminent characteristic of many of the earnest and zealous men who swelled the ranks of the insurgents of the seventeenth century; and the whole of his language is tinged with the same sombre, yet not uncheering hue, which marked their style, and which tradition has preserved, amid the distortion of malice and the caricature of levity. To M. Scribe, of course, much of the merit of the original design is due; but the soul of the composition is evidently the master-work of Meyerbeer, who has thrown himself with extraordinary ardor into the task of elaborating and completing the conception. That the mind of a composer, who had been from early life initiated into the inspired romance of Judaism, should almost involuntarily connect itself with religious aspirations, is not so singular as that it should be so eminently successful in portraying the sectarian Christian, not as a bigot, but as a believer, whose devotion, fierce though it be, is to be honored, and whose person it is impossible not to revere.

It is said that, in the original libretto, a fact had been selected from history to add a daring effect to the horrible scene of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. Amid all the terrors of the slaughter, while the hideous bell is roaring out the cry to murder, and the shrieks of frantic women are rising above the oaths of the charging soldiery, over all the clash and clang of the scene, a lofty window of yonder frowning edifice is raised, and, by the light of a lamp within, a dark face, distorted with fanatic madness, is seen to glare out upon the groups below. The apparition snatches an arquebuse from the wall, and, with a ferocious gesture, levels it at the flying crowd. He fires—but what is that single additional death-cry in such an hour of blood? Claspings his hands with fiendish glee, the stranger shrieks out to the sol-

diery, "Tuez! tuez! Parisians, behold your king!"

Censorships and lord-chamberlains have somewhat dull eyes for theatrical effects, but an exceedingly sensitive vision for any thing calculated to connect an unfavorable idea with the persons of the powers that be, whether historical or actual. The scene lacks this startling addition.

We have nothing more to add. The opera of "The Huguenots" will, perhaps, preserve to future ages the memory of a scene which their advanced humanity may have taught them to forget.

The Germans in San Francisco.

[The examples of Milwaukee, Chicago, &c., have shown us that the large admixture of the German element in our rapidly growing Western States, may be regarded as a pledge of musical and artistic culture in those busy populations. We hail with pleasure therefore, the facts thus recorded in a recent number of the *Alta California*.]

There are about 5,000 Germans in San Francisco. They are of all classes, and from all parts of Germany; from the mountains of the Tyrol to the delta of the Weser, from the hills of Alsace to the sands of the Vistula. Many of them have long been away from their native land; some in the United States and others in Spanish America and in the isles of the South Pacific. A great many of the foreign merchants of Mexico, Chili, Peru, and in the provinces on the eastern coast of South America, are Germans. Germany has no foreign colonies, and yet there is not room for all her citizens at home. The Spaniards have a partiality for the Germans; in former times Spain and Germany were united under one emperor, the most powerful monarch of Europe, and the associations connected with the history of the Empire are agreeable. But probably the main cause of the preference of the Spanish for the Germans is that the latter possess no political power out of the continent of Europe, while the English, French and Americans are dangerous on account of their maritime power as well as of their grasping disposition.

Spanish America has been a kind of a paradise for adventurous young German merchants, that wished to sow their wild oats away from home. Many of them, scattered from Chili to Chihuahua, were attracted by the gold of California, and some of them are now among our wealthiest citizens. This residence in Spanish America accounts for the fluency and correctness with which many of them speak Spanish. The great majority of the Germans in California intend to make their permanent residence here. They are almost universally republicans: nearly all become citizens; they learn English readily, and they adopt American manners and customs more readily than any other Europeans from the continent. The Germans here are very different as a class from those in the Atlantic States: there nearly all are mechanics and laborers, and but few well educated, while here they are nearly all intelligent men. They have several associations to keep up the memory of the "Vaterland." Among these the *Turn Verein*, or *Gymnastic Union*, is the first. Ever since its formation it has been in high favor with the German people. It was started at a time when all popular gatherings were forbidden by those who feared the interchange of ideas among the people. Gymnastic exercises are part of the education of youth in Germany and are even held so high that an Academy is there called a *Gymnasium*. When all other assemblages were forbidden, those for gymnastic exercises were considered harmless and were permitted, but they soon became the schools of democratic principles which they have since so effectively propagated. The San Francisco *Turn Verein* is in a very flourishing condition. The *Sänger-Bund*, Singers' band, is another popular German association. The wealthier Germans, who desire to be exclusive, have a club. The *Deutsches Club* possesses a valuable though not an extensive library and has its rooms very finely furnished. The Germans of California have one newspaper, the *Staats Zeitung* or *State Gazette* for their organ. It is published every week day, is edited with spirit

and has considerable circulation. It is democratic in politics. * * *

San Francisco has a German theatre, but it is yet only in its infancy. There is one German school in the city. The German population is very orderly and industrious. There is probably no class among the people which has fewer representatives, in proportion, as offenders before the courts than the Germans, and they have very few or no gamblers among their number. There are some occupations, which they nearly monopolize; thus the most of the dealers in cigars, musicians, and brewers in the city are Germans. The Union Band is composed entirely of Germans.

The Hippodrome.

[A New York correspondent of the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, gives his impression of this so-called "re-creation of the Grecian games," as follows:]

If New York has a small Crystal Palace, she has a very large Circus—an illustration of the compensation principle which goes far to satisfy her people, whose taste for horse-flesh is far finer than that for Art and Industry. The Hippodrome is a vast affair, situated at the intersection of Fifth Avenue and 23d street. Outside it presents only the appearance of a low brick walled building, of great area, with a canvass roof. Inside, this area, which is about a quarter of a mile in circumference, and of oval shape, is surrounded with ranges of seats rising gradually from the ground, within which is the arena for the performances.

The only evening I was present the Hippodrome was uncomfortably empty. There could not have been more than fifteen hundred persons present, making two patches of people on each of the long sides of the oval, while the rest was entirely vacant or, at best, only dotted over with dollar paying visitors and dead-heads. Of course such an audience cannot pay, but the profits of the first few weeks were so large that a few losing houses can be endured until a new excitement can be got up to attract the multitude. The performances of the Hippodrome are rather elegant than amusing—they are too much so, indeed, to be permanently popular with a New York public. The tournament displays are quite showy, but there is no great exhibition of skill or strength, and the show of fine dressing, banners, chariots and horses soon grows wearisome. The acrobatic and other exploits in the centre of the arena are good, but it is like looking at feats of agility a half a square off, and has nothing of that satisfying impression derived from a performance close to you as in an ordinary Circus.

The great feature, and the only one that keeps up any spirit in the affair, is the racing, and the Hippodrome may be regarded as simply a respectably got-up race-course, for the accommodation of those whose consciences will not permit them to visit the regular *bona fide* affair at Union Park.—There are races of female equestrians, races of chariots, races of monkeys on ponies, and, last and most ridiculous of all, races of ostriches. As each set of racers rides slowly around the arena on first entering, nearly everybody selects his favorite, and before the starting point is reached, hundreds have made their bets. It is rather exciting to see the racing and hear the shouts of the spectators urging on their favorite riders, but unless one has a very decided penchant for the turf, the affair soon grows wearisome.

I imagine that this racing is the only thing that keeps up the Hippodrome. Certainly the other performances are tame and spiritless compared to the scenes of the old-fashioned circus. The distances are so great as to make a powerful glass necessary for most of the exploits, and it is the pursuit of pleasure under difficulties to have to look through a lorgnette for it during an hour or two. Then there is no clown, and we miss the merry cry of Mr. Merryman—"Here we are, Sir!" as well as his shockingly worn-out jokes at his master's expense during the evening. An old-fashioned "ring," with good riders and tumbler and a good clown, and all right under your eye, is a far more satisfactory place of amusement than the New York Hippodrome.

For Dwight's Journal of Music.

Strictures upon the Stage,
AS IT EXISTS IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA.

II. SCENE PAINTING.

Scene painting has been lately admitted in England to be one of the Fine Arts, and no less an artist than Stansfield has directed his attention to it. Moving dioramas for the theatres, and scenery (so called) executed by him, were (as specimens of scene painting, exhibited at the back of the stage,) splendid works of the kind. But the true dignity of the painter's art, as connected with dramatic representations, appears to me not to be understood in England or in America. If it were understood he would exert a very different influence; he would not consider that to produce scenery was his only office; but the great dramas would come under his study as if he had to illustrate them in a pictorial work; their grand and important scenes would for the chief part be the realization of his conception (I mean as to the distribution and arrangement of the stage). He would be seen in front of the proscenium an important member of the stage managerial corps, and with his correct eye, and his picturesque imagination, correcting all harsh lines, harmonizing colors, heightening effects of contrast, and giving to the foreground the same light and shadow, the same chiaroscuro, that with a weaker motive and a lesser inspiration he imparts to the tame and speechless back-ground. But to obtain this light and shade, this chiaroscuro (a thing of the utmost importance and for the most part entirely novel to the stage, and which I will explain more particularly hereafter) the unnatural dispersed light, under the present mode of lighting the stage, would require to be altered.

Here is an addition to the office of stage manager! Here's work, my masters! Here's consternation among the actors! That crown won't do—that gold is too glittering. To the right and the left he sends red stockings and yellow stockings. Here he is suppressing color and bringing all into tone; here he adds a white feather, or a little red feather; here he throws a piece of armor upon the ground; here he calls up a piece of drapery. Here a dais, there a column. And thus things of apparently such little importance, as to be now subject to the caprice of a common carpenter or property maker, might receive the attention and surveillance of the greatest of living painters.

What we should gain by this arrangement the master genius of the painter alone could inform us, from whom we have all to hope and to expect; but it will convey to us some idea to contemplate, with the assistance of the author of "Modern Painters," some dramatic effects which have been the singular production of the Painter's genius. The following refers to the treatment of the Massacre of the Innocents by Tintoret:—

"The artist here does not depend on details of murder or ghastliness of death; there is no blood, no stabbing or cutting, but there is an awful substitute for these in the Chiaroscuro. The scene is the outer vestibule of a palace; the slippery marble floor is fearfully barred across by sanguine shadows, so that our eyes seem to become bloodshot and stained with strange horror and deadly vision; a lake of life before them, like the burning sun of the doomed Moabite on the water that came by the way of Edom; a huge flight of stairs, without parapet, descends on the left; down this rush a crowd of women mixed with the murderers; the child in the arms of one has been seized by the limbs, she hurls herself over the edge, and falls head downward, dragging the child out of the grasp by her weight;—she will be dashed dead in a second: two others are further in flight, they reach the edge of a deep river,—the water is beat into a hollow by the force of their plunge; close to us is the great struggle, a heap of mothers entangled in one mortal writhe with each other and the swords, one of the murderers dashed down and crushed beneath them, the sword of another caught by the blade and dragged at by a woman's naked hand; the youngest and fairest of the women, the child just torn away from a death grasp, and clasped to her breast with the grip of a steel vice, falls backward help-

lessly over the heap, right on the sword points: all knit together and hurled down in one hopeless, frenzied, furious abandonment of body and soul in the effort to save. Their shrieks ring in our ears till the marble seems ringing around us; but far back at the bottom of the stairs, there is something in the shadow like a heap of clothes. It is a woman sitting quiet—quite quiet—still as any stone, she looks down steadfastly on her dead child, laid along on the floor before her, and her hand is pressed softly upon her brow."

The same writer says:—

"I should exhaust the patience of the reader, if I were to dwell at length on the various stupendous developments of the imagination of Tintoret in the Scuola di san Rocco alone. I would fain join in that solemn pause of the journey into Egypt, when the silver boughs of the shadowy trees lace with their tremulous lines the alternate folds of fair clouds flushed by faint crimson light, and lie across the streams of blue between those rosy islands, like the white wakes of wandering ships; or watch beside the sleep of the disciples among those mossy leaves, that lie so heavily on the dead of the night, beneath the descent of the angel of the agony, and toss fearfully above the motion of the torches as the troop of the betrayer emerges out of the hollow of the olives; or wait through the hour of accusing beside the judgment seat of Pilate, when all is unseen, unfelt, except the one figure that stands with its head bowed down, pale like a pillar of moonlight, half bathed in the glory of the Godhead, half wrapt in the whiteness of the shroud."

When, upon the stage, do we get any such attempts at ideality as this?

Let any one remember the 'Belshazzar's Feast,' the attitude of Belshazzar,—the architecture, the grouping, the chiaroscuro—and suppose only a faint realization of such in the banquet scene in Macbeth.

But how much, we feel, has yet to be learned in this department of the stage, when we contemplate the radical mistake which has been made from the first in scene painting. And that mistake is, the constituting the farthest wings the frame of the painting; thus placing the frame of the picture at the back of the stage. Now if we look at these things correctly, the proscenium is the frame of the picture and the front of the stage the foreground. We cannot travel to the back of the stage for the foreground of the scene, when the action of the scene is going on in front. Is that this child's play! Surely the principle I have here laid down displays the only correct method of building stage scenery. I see many improvements that could be made in the machinery of the stage for the accommodation of the painter in working out his perspective; and if it were necessary I could show that it would be perfectly practicable to make the stage represent a mountain summit.

But I will not take up the time of my readers with any further remarks at present on scene painting, but—with these hints—I leave it in the hands of those who understand this subject better than I do, that they may tell us what might and ought to be done.

It is evident that it has hitherto been trifled with, and no attempt made at conveying the idea of truth. And truly it is enough to make us blush to think of a few of the absurdities we have seen in this way. What pretty "foot-pieces" we have seen running across the stage as a partition to divide off the river from the "boards." The one, for instance, behind which the boat is pushed on in the "Miller and his Men," or that with Albert and Willibald in "The Bottle Imp." The same absurdities occur in Shakspearian representations also. Still more money is expended upon a scene of fountains and terraces, in one of their trumpery ballets at the Queen's Italian Opera House, than would give truth at least to twenty Shakspearian scenes. But let us once get scenes of truth and connected with actions of thought, and such senseless exhibitions will soon appear "stale, flat and unprofitable." The public will miss the idea and crave for it; and will not be content with the impossible and the improbable, however gorgeously it may be colored or however prettily it may be tricked off, for as soon as taste becomes cultivated into a knowledge and perception of Nature and Truth, it will never receive

"—these tenders for true pay,
Which are not sterling."

Dwight's Journal of Music.

BOSTON, JULY 2, 1853.

Fourth Jubilee of the German Singing Clubs.

Decidedly the musical event of our midsummer season is the annual gathering, from all the Eastern States, of the numerous circles of male part-singers, which are kept up so enthusiastically among the Germans, as a beautiful reminiscence of the Fatherland. Last year the four days' festival was held in New York. This year it came off with more than usual spirit and preparation in Philadelphia. We hope the time is not far distant when our Northeastern metropolis may in its turn become the focus of all this fine popular enthusiasm for Art and Freedom. If we are north of the centre of the young Germany of the Atlantic States, yet railroads bring us within hailing distance; and a New England atmosphere would but transpose the music into a new and interesting key for the time being. The worst is, Boston is a small state in the musico-German confederacy as yet, having, we believe, but one solitary Liederkrantz, while Philadelphia, and New York, and its smaller neighbors, each are represented by a dozen clubs. We trust the spirit of these annual gatherings will find sympathetic nerves in the German population (small only by comparison) of Boston and vicinity, and start into life a goodly crop of Männerchöre.

But to us Americans this spectacle is interesting in another aspect. At first we look on simply as upon a charming national custom which our German neighbors have brought over with them. It is characteristic and imposing, and we enjoy it as an importation of that genial, happy, social and artistic life, which has seemed so ideal as we read about it, and which it is so pleasant to have brought under our own immediate observation. Its nationality gives it a pleasant piquancy, viewed as a spectacle outside of us, and cannot be in the least objectionable, since its animating spirit is essentially in harmony with the free spirit of our own institutions. It even benefits us by the example of popular mass-gatherings so brimming with the sentiment of liberty, and yet kept so orderly, harmonious and peaceful by a certain practically religious worship of Art with Liberty, which it is refreshing and encouraging to witness.

But the interesting question about it is: Why may not we, who are not Germans, borrow this excellent practice and incorporate it into our American life. If the music-loving Germans must seek out a republic for the free continuance of their musical existence, so on the other hand must a widespread, imperial democracy like this seek pledges of good order, concord and refinement in an all-pervading and inspiring influence of Art. The needed element comes providentially, with the tide of immigration, in the persons of these hearty, generous, art-loving Teutonic cousins of our Anglo-Saxon blood. As they assimilate to us politically, let us assimilate to them in the warm, rhythmic social culture, of which as a people they are the most quickening example. Glee-singing, which is only technically distinct from the German "part-singing," is a growing passion with our young men. A large proportion of our so-called "Glees" are adaptations from the German part-songs; and German music takes every day a deeper hold

upon American sympathies and tastes than any other music. We would not have the charm of separate nationality in these German festivals dissolved; but we should be pleased to see Americans and Germans, (in this great land of blended nationalities, where all peoples are combined to make one good liberal and universal people), mingling together and making common cause in this great work of developing a popular musical sentiment. Why may not singing clubs be organized, American, with Germans in them, (for they are our teachers and examples in this sphere of Art) and be affiliated over the country, and hold annual festivals at midsummer at different points in turn? We cannot but think it in the very tendency of things that this shall naturally and gradually come about. We read that in the Philadelphia festival, this week, a club of native Philadelphians took their turn in singing with the German Club, and did not suffer in the comparison.

We had hoped to receive ere this an express report of the Philadelphia festival; in the want of which, we must glean what account we can from the local papers. It commenced on the 25th and lasted till the 29th. The Philadelphia Germans had made the most extensive preparations, and societies were present from all the cities from Richmond to Boston, numbering some 800 voices. That is, we understand, besides the local clubs. The guests arrived on Saturday evening and by torch-light were escorted to the front of the Custom House, where the Welcome Song was sung; thence by an extended route to the Chinese Museum, where addresses were interchanged, succeeded by a collation. For Sunday there was no programme, but it was left to the tastes of the different societies or individuals.

On Monday the Jubilee proper commenced with rehearsals for the grand concert; after which a grand procession to old Independence Hall, where the Mayor welcomed the guests to the city. In the evening the grand concert took place in the upper saloon of the Chinese Museum, before an audience of several thousand persons. We let the *Bulletin* describe the scene.

The hall was tastefully decorated with flags of different nations, wreaths and festoons of evergreens, and all around the galleries the names of the great composers of Germany, with a few of France and Italy, were displayed in bold letters. The stage occupied the entire Eastern end of the hall, sloping up from the floor to a line above the galleries. In front of it were placed the orchestra. Vast as was the stage, it was not large enough to accommodate all the singers at once; but there appeared to be generally about five hundred on it at a time.

The programme seems to have been rather second-rate for one so purely German, and yet for the most part new (to us) and far from uninteresting. It opened with Reissiger's pretty Overture to *Felsenmühle*, well played by an orchestra of fifty. Then followed Mendelssohn's "Ode to Artists," founded, we believe, on Schiller's noble poem, *An die Künstler*, written for the Belgian festival in 1846, where Mendelssohn conducted; we believe, too, that it does not rank among his finest works. This was sung by the whole chorus, with wind instruments.

To this succeeded a buffo song of Kücken's, "Blue Monday," sung cleverly by the Williamsburgh Männerchor; "The Woodland," very well given by the Eintracht Glee Club of Newark, and a Rhenish Drinking Song by Kücken, graceful and joyous, and so well sung by the Wilmington "Sänger-bund," that it received an enthusiastic encore.

The first part of the programme concluded with a grand chorus by Zollner, in religious style, full of beauty and sung with great effect by the vast chorus, which, in this piece, seemed to be quite at home and at ease.

The second part opened with a descriptive song by Fischer, representing a Calm at Sea and a Prosperous Voyage. It was the best song of all the full choruses, and to those who were in a position—hard to find in this hall—where the music could be well heard, the effect of such a body of voices, all harmonizing well and observing the lights and shades of sound required by the composition, was truly magnificent. This was encored also. After it came a jolly chorus by Zollner, representing a contest between wine and water drinkers—sung with much spirit and entire correctness by the Baltimore singers, and also redemanded. The Philadelphia Glee Association, consisting of about twenty young men of this city, all Americans, then sang a Turkish Drinking Song, with English words, and the music by Mendelssohn. They have good voices and are well balanced in the several parts. Their performance was capital—quite equal to the best of the Germans, and the latter partook largely of the enthusiasm excited by the unexpected excellence of a company of native singers. The piece they sung was one more readily appreciated than most of Mendelssohn's, but abounding in nice harmonies, requiring great readiness and quickness of ear. We hope for other opportunities of hearing this excellent society. The New York singers, numbering a couple of hundred, next sang Schmalholz's Prayer before Battle. The whole grand chorus then sang a piece by Abt, one of the most tender and graceful of German modern composers, and the concert closed with Greger's Hymn to Gladness.

The evening was one to be remembered, not only for the novelty of hearing so large a body of singers together, but for the genuine beauty of the performance.

We have seen no account of Tuesday's performances, but the day was to be spent in *Freien*, in the open air, at a pleasant spot outside of Philadelphia, called Lemon Hill; and the plan of the campaign was in this wise: at 8 o'clock in the morning, a procession, with flags and insignia, and several military bands, out to the hill aforesaid; then a repetition, in full chorus, of the Mendelssohn-Schiller Ode aforesaid; then an oration, followed by an out-door concert by the societies from abroad; then dinner, military music, and amusements of all kinds; a procession back to head-quarters in the city, a deliberation by delegates on the place and manner of the Fifth General Music Jubilee, sleep, and a scattering for home next morning. Again we venture to express the hope that Boston will ere long have a large Sänger-Bund enough to bear its turn of hospitality to all the others.

Cologne Union of Men Voices.

The season of the annual congress of the German Song Unions in our own country lends interest to the following account, from a London paper, of the first appearance in England of a model society of this kind from the Fatherland. We omit what is said of the origin of these societies, having given substantially the same account in a number of this journal a year since.

A very crowded audience filled the Hanover-square Rooms on Tuesday morning, at the first of a series of six concerts, to be given by the Kölner Männer Gesang-Verein, one of the most renowned of the choral societies of Germany. The result was a musical treat of the highest order. No performance of the kind of equal merit has ever before been heard in London—that of the Berlin choir not excepted.

The Cologne Union of male vocalists was instituted in 1842, under the superintendence of Herr Franz Weber, who has been appointed director for life. Its members are all amateurs; and the sole object of the society is the promotion of a

taste for German song, which, it is believed, must also exercise a beneficial influence on the moral elevation of the people. The proceeds of their public performances are devoted to "useful, patriotic, and charitable purposes;" and the motto they have adopted, "*Durch das Schöne stets das Gute*" ("Let the good be always attained by the beautiful"), suggests the policy upon which they act. In the great contests at the vocal festivals in Belgium the Cologne Union has carried off all the prizes. The German-Flemish Vocal Festival, the largest ever held on the continent, was instituted by its members, and its first celebration (in 1846) was rendered memorable by the presence of Mendelssohn, who, besides being the principal conductor, composed a new work expressly for the occasion. The society numbers, in all, 172 members, of whom 80 of the principals comprised the force which on Tuesday filled the orchestra of the Hanover-square rooms. The performance of these gentlemen may, without the slightest hesitation, be characterised as perfect. For truth of intonation, decision of accent, harmony of ensemble, ready command of all the gradations of force—from the strongest *forte* to the most delicate *piano*, rather breathed than sung—we have heard nothing to equal them in any body of chorists. But these desirable mechanical requisites are made the more valuable from the excellent use to which they are put. The experience and ability of Herr Franz Weber, the conductor, are incontestable. He has an authority over his vocal orchestra that admits of no denial. The slightest motion of his baton changes a *fortissimo* into a *pianissimo*, as if by magic; and his beat is so clear and prompt that not a note is ever sustained by any single voice a second longer than he intends. Execution, so sure and satisfactory, so unerringly correct, and so scrupulous in the observance of details, has alone an indefinable charm; but when to this are added all the varieties of expression, applied with unflinching ease and propriety, as in the present instance, the charm is doubled. The "*Gross an England*," a cantata, with appropriate words by M. Klingemann, set to music for the occasion by the Chevalier Neukomm, at once made the audience aware of the great excellences of the choir. These, however, were more variously and happily developed in the pieces from their repertoire. In the *Abendlied* (Evening Song) of Otto, and in subsequent *morceaux* (which, it must be observed, derived their chief interest from the execution), the exquisite *pianissimo*, and the singular and unprecedented management of the *crescendos*, quite enraptured the audience. A chorus, with quartet of single voices, outside the room—*Doppelstündchen* (double serenade), by A. Zollner, though of slight value as music, produced an effect so entirely original, that it was unanimously re-demanded. A similar compliment was paid to Kücken's "Normann's Song," a stirring and animated chorus, which brought out the power and volume of the whole body of voices, in *fortissimo* passages, with astounding effect. There are some very striking points in this chorus, especially one on the words, "*Freiheit oder Tod*" ("Freedom or Death"), which is frequently repeated, and always with increasing force and majesty. A good example, in another style, was the "*Tralerliedchen*" of Ferdinand Ries—a spring-song of irresistible vivacity. Best of all, however, was the "*Wasserfahrt*" (Water Journey) of Heine, set to music by Mendelssohn, a chorus of peculiar loveliness, melancholy in tone, but, as a musical composition, worth all the rest of the programme put together. This was sung in an irreproachable manner, and left a deep impression. The national anthem, "God Save the Queen," was extremely well executed, although transposed a third above the original key.

Mademoiselle Clauss's highly-finished and poetical reading of three of Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* (the *Adagio* in F, the *Volkstied*, and the *Presto* in C), and her brilliant execution of Weber's *Invitation à la Valse*, formed a grateful relief to the choral performances, and were warmly applauded.

To the above we add the opinion of the distinguished critic of the *Athenaeum*, of June 11. No

man is better qualified to judge of the German part-singers, than the author of "Music and Manners in Germany," of which we are happy to hear that an enlarged edition is in press.

The musical event of the week has been, the appearance of *Der Kölner Männer Gesang Verein*, which is represented by eighty gentlemen belonging to the famous singing society of the city of the Three Kings. * * * Herr Franz Weber is a consummate director. If we mistake not, it is under his presidency that the best orchestral Mass in Europe—the one, we mean, in the Cathedral of Cologne—is performed. The vigor, clearness, and consent of these Rhineland singers—the grand and piercing body of sound which they give forth—their perfect command over every gradation of tone—produce a specific and strong effect on the nerves analogous to that called out by the music of wind instruments, which is among the strongest of sensual excitements. When the shock is recovered from (to a shock it amounts) the listener becomes aware of some interesting peculiarities. Supposing him conversant with the voices of other countries, he will remark, on comparison, a certain throaty and hard quality among the German tenors:—singing as they do in a high chest-register, which distinguishes the leading voices of their male quartets from the nasal *falsetto* of France—the more fluent tone of Donzelli's Rubini's and Mario's countrymen—or the lower-pitched diapason of our English tenors. Generally speaking, the quality just noted seems incompatible with that melting or blending of voices which forms the greatest charm of part-singing:—but no crude insulation of the upper notes is to be complained of in this Cologne vocal quartet,—which, on the contrary, for a body of sound so forcible and ready, is singularly ripe and mellow. Further, an elasticity and a sonority, no less precious, are to be commended in its *piano* and *mezzo-forte* passages.

Beethoven's Adagios—The "Moon-Light" Sonata—Liszt.

[We translate the following from the *Voyage Musical en Allemagne et en Italie* of HECTOR BERLIOZ, Paris, 1844.]

Beethoven's astonishing faculty of being always now without departing from the true and beautiful, is conceivable to a certain point in pieces of a lively movement. There the thought, aided by the powers of rhythm, can in its capricious bounds leap from the beaten paths more easily. But where we cease to comprehend it, it is in the *Adagios*, in those extra-human meditations into which the pantheistic genius of Beethoven is so fond of plunging. Here we have no more passions; no more terrestrial pictures; no more hymns to joy, to love, to glory; no more strains of childhood, sweet conversations, biting or humorous sallies; no more of those terrible bursts of fury, of those accents of hatred which the spasms of a secret suffering so often wrench from him; he has even no more contempt in his heart; he is no longer of our race; he has forgotten it, he has departed from our atmosphere. Calm and solitary, he swims in the clear Ether; like those eagles of the Andes sailing at altitudes below which other creatures only meet asphyxia and death, his eyes plunge into space, he flies from sun to sun, chanting the infinity of Nature. Can one believe that the genius of this man *could* take such a flight, however much he wished it!

Of this one may convince himself, by numerous proofs which he has left us, less even in his symphonies than in his piano-forte compositions. There, and only there, having no longer in view a numerous audience,—no crowd, no public,—he seems to have written for himself, with that majestic *abandon* which the crowd comprehends

not, and which must inevitably be spoiled by the necessity of promptly arriving at what we call *effect*. There too the task of the executant becomes a crushing one, if not by the mechanical difficulties, at least by the profound sentiment, by the large intelligence which such works exact of him; it is absolutely essential that the virtuoso should make himself invisible before the composer, just as the orchestra must in the symphonies; there must be a complete absorption of the one in the other. But it is precisely in this identifying of himself with the thought which he transmits to us, that the interpreter grows to the full height of his model.

There is a work of Beethoven, known by the name of the *Sonata in C sharp minor*, the *Adagio* of which is one of those poesies which human language knows not how to designate. Its means of action are very simple; the left hand softly lays out large chords of a sad and solemn character, and of such length as to allow the vibrations of the piano gradually to die away upon each one; above this, the lower fingers of the right hand keep up an obstinate arpeggio accompaniment, of which the form never varies from the first measure to the last; while the other fingers render audible a sort of lamentation, the melodic efflorescence of this sombre harmony.

One day, some seven or eight years ago, Liszt, in executing this *Adagio* before a little circle of which I made one, took it into his head to alter and denaturalize it, after the manner usually adopted then to win the applause of the fashionable public: instead of holding out those long notes in the bass, instead of the severe uniformity of rhythm and of movement just alluded to, he introduced trills and tremolos; he hurried and retarded the measure, disturbing thus by passionate accents the calmness of this sadness, and making thunders groan in this cloudless sky, which should be only sombered by the sun's departure. . . . I must confess, I suffered cruelly, more even than I ever suffered hearing our unfortunate *cantatrici* embroider the grand monologue in *Freyschütz*; for, to this torture was added the chagrin of seeing such an artist indulge in a trick that ordinarily belongs only to mediocrity. But what was to be done about it? Liszt was then like a child who, without complaining, picks himself up from a fall which we pretend not to perceive, and who would cry were you to offer him your hand. He has risen up proudly: for several years past especially it is no longer he who pursues success, but success which is out of breath in following him; the rôles are exchanged. Let us return to our Sonata.

Recently one of those men of heart and soul, whom artists are so happy to encounter, had assembled a few friends; I was of the number. Liszt arrived in the evening, and,—finding a discussion going on about the value of a piece of Weber's, to which the public, whether because it was poorly executed, or from some other reason, had in a recent concert given but a cold reception,—seated himself at the piano to answer in his manner to the antagonists of Weber. The argument appeared unanswerable, and all were obliged to confess that a work of genius had been misappreciated. Just as he had finished, the lamp which lighted the apartment appeared on the point of going out: one of the company went to revive it.

—Do no such thing, said I; if he will play

the *Adagio* of Beethoven in C sharp minor, this twilight will not be amiss.

—With all my heart, said Liszt; but extinguish the light entirely, cover up the fire, let the darkness be complete.

Then, in the midst of those deep shades, after a moment for collecting our thoughts, the noble elegy, the same which he had formerly so strangely disfigured, rose in its sublime simplicity; not a note, not an accent were added to the notes and accents of the author. It was the shade of Beethoven, evoked by the virtuoso, whose grand voice we were hearing. Each of us shuddered in silence, and after the last chord we were silent still we wept.

A very considerable portion of the French public are yet ignorant of the existence of these marvellous works. Surely the entire Trio in B flat, the *Adagio* of that in D, and the Sonata in A with violin, should be enough to prove, to those who know them, that the illustrious composer was far from having expended all the treasures of his genius upon the orchestra. But his last word is not there; it is in the sonatas for the piano alone that we must seek it. The time perhaps will soon come when these works, which leave behind them all that there is most advanced in Art, will be comprehended, if not by the crowd, at least by a select public. It is an experiment to be tried; if it do not succeed, it must be tried hereafter. The grand sonatas of Beethoven will serve for a metrical scale to measure the development of our musical intelligence.

MUSIC ON THE COMMON. The early hours have been wisely changed, so that now we have music, both on Wednesday and Saturday evenings, from 7 until 10 o'clock. The experiment has been quite successful, so far as the large and cheerful gathering and good order of the people are concerned. But on a windy night, like last Saturday, the band being perched upon a hill, the sounds are blown away above the heads of the crowd. It would be better always, and certainly when there is wind, that the band be stationed in a hollow, and the audience occupy the surrounding slopes. The "Germania Serenade Band" have not yet taken their turn; when they do, we may hope for a mitigation of the eternal *din-din* of brass. We are glad to see the *Traveler* copying and endorsing our correspondent's appeal on this subject.

IN THE SUBURBS. The love for out-door music has become contagious all about Boston,—a very wholesome influence for the city to send back to the green hills of Roxbury and Brookline in exchange for airs freighted with rose and honeysuckle odors. Nor will we return them altogether *brass* airs. Our Brookline friends have engaged the Serenade Band to play for them, as newly organized for such purposes, with fourteen instruments, half reeds, half brass. This is a good beginning of reform.

It is pleasant to meet the familiar faces of the "Germanians" again in Boston, ere they take up their dog-day quarters at Newport. Mr. Bergmann, we are sorry to hear, is obliged to recruit his exhausted strength at a Water Cure, that he may be sound and bright for our autumn season of concerts. They can get along without him in the Newport polkas.

Mr. Otto Dresel has gone to Newport for the rest of the summer. We fancy choice feasts of Mendelssohn and Chopin there sometimes, in spite of the Polkas.

New York.

"In musical matters," says a letter writer to a Philadelphia paper, "there is an absolute calm, nobody is either playing or singing, and New York is full of 'artists' out of employment, and many of them out at elbows. They may be seen and heard, chattering Italian or French, at the bar-rooms, the cheap restaurants, and

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